

## THE PATH OF RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Committing three evil acts by deeds and four evil acts by words in order to earn a living constitutes Wrong Livelihood. Avoidance of these evil deeds in earning one's livelihood means following the Path of Right Livelihood.

"What, Bhikkhus, is Right Livelihood? In this teaching, the noble disciple avoiding a wrong way of living, gets his livelihood by a right way of living. This is called Right Livelihood." Wrong livelihood is earning one's living through unlawful, unwholesome means such as killing and stealing. The three evil acts by deeds and four evil acts by words amount only to wrong action (*Micchā kammanta*) and wrong speech (*Micchā vācā*) when they have no connection with earning one's livelihood. They do not form Wrong Livelihood. Thus, for instance, killing flies, mosquitoes, insects, snakes or an enemy through anger or hatred amounts to an evil act of deeds, a wrong action, but not Wrong Livelihood. Killing animals such as poultry, pigs, goats, or fish for the market or for one's own table definitely constitutes Wrong Livelihood.

In general stealing and robbery are motivated by economic reasons. These will therefore be classed as wrong livelihood. When however, the reason is not economic but revenge or habit, these deeds constitute merely wrong action. Illicit sexual intercourse usually has nothing to do with earning a livelihood; but seduction of women and ruining them purposely for employment in carnal trade are, of course, Wrong Livelihood.

Lying is just wrong Speech when not motivated by economic reason; but when falsehood is employed in commercial transactions or in law courts to promote business, it amounts to Wrong Livelihood. Similarly slandering, devoid of economic interest, is Wrong Speech. But nowadays false charges or denunciatory remarks are common methods employed to bring discredit to the rival party and as they are mostly concerned with business, they may be regarded as Wrong Livelihood. Harsh speech or abusive language is rarely employed in business transactions and is therefore usually just Wrong Speech. Modern novels, fictions, stories, plays and dramas, cinemas may all be regarded mostly as means of Wrong Livelihood. Such wrong ways of earning livelihood (by means of killing, stealing and lying) are deeds which are bereft of moral principles maintained by upright people.

## SEEKING WEALTH THROUGH UNLAWFUL MEANS IS WRONG LIVELIHOOD

One who observes the five precepts has to avoid the above seven evil ways of earning a livelihood. In the *Ājivatthamaka Sōla*, avoidance of wrong livelihood is included as one of the factors of the eight precepts. Thus avoiding the wrong means of livelihood and earning one's livelihood in accordance with the moral principles of upright people constitutes right livelihood.

## SEEKING WEALTH IN CONSONANCE WITH MORAL LAW IS RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

Here again, just like *sammāvācā* and *sammā kammanta*, right livelihood, *sammā ājōva* is also a practice of avoidance, *virati cetasika*. Therefore, avoidance of wrong livelihood only is to be regarded as right livelihood. Right livelihood should be developed by observance of precepts. It should be developed too by *Vipassanā* meditation until *virati* factor of the path is fulfilled. For further elaboration on right livelihood, reference may be made to our discourse on *Sallekha Sutta*, vol. II.

These three factors right speech, right action and right livelihood belong to the *sōla* group of the eightfold noble path. We shall now proceed to discuss the constituents of the *samādhī* group.

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"Maha-cattarisaka Sutta, The Great Forty", translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

"[5] Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? One discerns wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood, and right livelihood as right livelihood. And what is wrong livelihood? Scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, and pursuing gain with gain; this is wrong livelihood.

"And what is right livelihood? Right livelihood, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right livelihood with fermentations, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right livelihood, without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"And what is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, and results in acquisitions? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abandons wrong livelihood and maintains his life with right livelihood. This is the right livelihood that has fermentations, sides with merit, and results in acquisitions.

"And what is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of wrong livelihood in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right livelihood that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.

"One tries to abandon wrong livelihood and to enter into right livelihood: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong livelihood and to enter and remain in right livelihood: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities -- right view, right effort, and right mindfulness -- run and circle around right livelihood.

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, right resolve comes into being. In one of right resolve, right speech comes into being. In one of right speech, right action... In one of right action, right livelihood... In one of right livelihood, right effort... In one of right effort, right mindfulness... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration... In one of right concentration, right knowledge... In one of right knowledge, right release comes into being. Thus the learner is endowed with eight factors, and the Arahant with ten.

"Of those, right view is the forerunner. And how is right view the forerunner? In one of right view, wrong view is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong view as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right view as their condition go to the culmination of their development. In one of right resolve, wrong resolve is abolished... In one of right speech, wrong speech is abolished... In one of right action, wrong action is abolished... In one of right livelihood, wrong livelihood is abolished... In one of right effort, wrong effort is abolished... In one of right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is abolished... In one of right concentration, wrong concentration is abolished... In one of right knowledge, wrong knowledge is abolished... In one of right release, wrong release is abolished. The many evil, unskillful qualities that come into play with wrong release as their condition are also abolished, while the many skillful qualities that have right release as their condition go to the culmination of their development.

"Thus, monks, there are twenty factors siding with skillfulness, and twenty with un-skillfulness.

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"MN 78 PTS: M ii 22 Samana-Mundika Sutta: Mundika the Contemplative", translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

"If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back. Which four? There is the case where he does no evil action with his body, speaks no evil speech, resolves on no evil resolve, and maintains himself with no evil means of livelihood. If an individual is endowed with these four qualities, I do not describe him as consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments. Rather, he stands on the same level as a stupid baby boy lying on its back. "An individual endowed with ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments.

With regard to that point, one should know that 'These are unskillful habits,' I say. With regard to that point, one should know that 'That is the cause of unskillful habits'...'Here unskillful habits cease without trace'...'This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits,' I say.

"With regard to that point, one should know that 'These are skillful habits'...'That is the cause of skillful habits'...'Here skillful habits cease without trace'...'This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits,' I say.

"With regard to that point, one should know that 'These are unskillful resolves'...'That is the cause of unskillful resolves'...'Here unskillful resolves cease without trace'...'This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves' I say.

"With regard to that point, one should know that 'These are skillful resolves'...'That is the cause of skillful resolves'...'Here skillful resolves cease without trace'...'This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves,' I say.

"Now what are unskillful habits? Unskillful bodily actions, unskillful verbal actions, evil means of livelihood. These are called unskillful habits. What is the cause of unskillful habits? Their cause is stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind? — for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind with passion, aversion or delusion: That is the cause of unskillful habits.

Now where do unskillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation has been stated: There is the case where a monk abandons wrong bodily conduct & develops right bodily conduct, abandons wrong verbal conduct & develops right verbal conduct, abandons wrong livelihood & maintains his life with right livelihood. This is where unskillful habits cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen...for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen...for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen...(and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful habits.

"And what are skillful habits? Skillful bodily actions, skillful verbal actions, purity of livelihood. These are called skillful habits. What is the cause of skillful habits? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be mind-caused. Which mind? — for the mind has many modes & permutations. Any mind without passion, without aversion, without delusion: That is the cause of skillful habits. Now where do skillful habits cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk is virtuous, but not fashioned of virtue. [2] He discerns, as it actually is, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those skillful habits cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits? There is the case where a monk generates desire...for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen...for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen...for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen...(and) for the...development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful habits.

"And what are unskillful resolves? Being resolved on sensuality, on ill will, on harmfulness. These are called unskillful resolves. What is the cause of unskillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception? — for perception has many modes & permutations. Any sensuality-perception, ill will-perception or harmfulness-perception: That is the cause of unskillful resolves. Now where do unskillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is where unskillful resolves cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire...for the sake of the

non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen...for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen...for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the...development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of unskillful resolves.

“And what are skillful resolves? Being resolved on renunciation (freedom from sensuality), on non-ill will, on harmlessness. These are called skillful resolves. What is the cause of skillful resolves? Their cause, too, has been stated, and they are said to be perception-caused. Which perception? — for perception has many modes & permutations. Any renunciation-perception, non-ill will-perception or harmlessness-perception: That is the cause of skillful resolves. Now where do skillful resolves cease without trace? Their cessation, too, has been stated: There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. This is where skillful resolves cease without trace. And what sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves? There is the case where a monk generates desire...for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen...for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen...for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen...(and) for the... development & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This sort of practice is the practice leading to the cessation of skillful resolves.

“Now, an individual endowed with which ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments? One endowed with the right view of one beyond training, the right resolve of one beyond training, the right speech... the right action... the right livelihood... the right effort... the right mindfulness... the right concentration... the right knowledge... the right release of one beyond training. An individual endowed with these ten qualities is one whom I describe as being consummate in what is skillful, foremost in what is skillful, an invincible contemplative attained to the highest attainments.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Pañcakanga the carpenter delighted in the Blessed One's words.